



## Effluent Project with the City of Deer Lodge

In 1999 the Park entered into a 5 year cooperative agreement with the City of Deer Lodge to disperse sewage effluent on 110 acres of park land. The project was supported by the Tri-State-Water Quality Council- Voluntary Nutrient Reduction Program(VNRP) whose mission it is to reduce point source pollution in the Clark Fork River. The City of Deer Lodge is one of three cities on the Clark Fork that contribute to this problem.

Over \$200,000 in grant money was secured to establish this program and pay operating costs for 3 years. The 5 year agreement allowed the City time to work out a permanent solution to an overburdened and outdated wastewater treatment system prior to stricter, new EPA guidelines due out in 2008.

The park agreed to accept treated effluent on north pastures to revitalize a water right and to irrigate fields within the cultural landscape of the Ranch, providing pollutants remain below health and safety requirements. Pollutants have been monitored in 11 testing wells, with no cumulative impacts at this time. However, naturally occurring arsenic has been mobilized and is moving closer to the river from the continuous watering. A new 3 year agreement was signed fall 2004 to continue to accept the effluent while the City explores its options. The park negotiated a new financial agreement that splits the \$20,000 annual costs, equally, while the City exercises a contract to complete engineering studies and design for a permanent solution. The City has retained HKM Engineering, of Butte, to develop non-park alternatives. Tri-State and DEQ stand in firm support of relocating this municipal function to land owned wholly by the City. Regardless which option the City ultimately pursues, costs are estimated at \$4-8 million to create a wastewater treatment system that will meet EPA and Montana DEQ requirements.

The park wishes to sunset this arrangement as soon as possible, due to conflicts with national NPS policy regarding this issue. In addition, the north pastures no longer need watering as weed growth and non native species have taken hold as a result of altering this landscape from dry upland pasture. The park supports the City to find funding through any means necessary to accomplish the upgrades and relocate this process off of park land.